

Rouge Ravager (September Sessions 2024). Alex Margo Arden, Craig Jun Li, Cara Tolmie, Sam Cottingham, z.No Scott.

The second edition of September Sessions presents *Rouge Ravager* – a specially curated program by Yaby. It will unfold at the curious setting of Skandia, a cinema inaugurated in 1923 with an imaginative design by one of the leading Swedish architects of the time, Gunnar Asplund. The deep red, dimly lit interior of Skandia draws attention to the instancy of felt space, its here and now. But like any other cinema, this is a place of representation where experience is taken from one situation to another. Asplund's desire was to create an atmospheric environment for film projection that followed the prevailing style trend of the United States: the indoors was conceived to evoke the outdoors environment. Velvet, the screen and an invoked elsewhere intermingle and set the tone for the curated program *Rouge Ravager*.

Rouge Ravager looks at the performative side of visual art through a series of offsite pieces that engage with “liveness” —they happen, they do something, they conjure up time and respond theatrically to the narratives staged by a particular space. Like in the architectural and cinematic demeanor of Skandia, notions of here and elsewhere underlie the works of the selected artists, pulling the audience to different settings and pointing their attention to different places or moments where a sense of meaning or at least completeness might be located. Presentness gets boosted through anticipation and spark, charged with conjecture, tropes, wariness and hanging emotions.

Hereness, thereness and presentness bring up questions about the import of different sensory planes, social adjustments, how instants of engagement happen or last, and how closeness and distancing shape those collective feelings that will become significant. If performance names an “actualized sphere,” we can see this group of dispersed and ephemeral artistic gestures as contending with the palpability of certain situations or atmospheres, pondering their materiality, textures, chemistry, their entry points and the conditions of life that they afford.

Alex Margo Arden. *Staged Alarm System*, 2024

Installation of theatrical backcloth

Staged Alarm System furthers Alex Margo Arden's investigations into safety legislation, protocols, and breaches in the history of theater and cinema. The artist has installed a twelve-meter wide backcloth replicating a safety curtain in the auditorium of the historic Skandia theater. Safety curtains have traditionally been used in UK theaters as barriers to protect the audience from the stage in case of a sudden fire and, typically, they are spectacularly decorated.

Arden's curtain depicts the empty inside of the theater itself, its seating area without an audience, pierced by large white letters that declare the purpose of this threshold: “safety curtain”. Being the most visible piece of a security protocol that responds to danger, the curtain is also a plain parting between the audience and the play. The piece plays on the visibility of this particular element of a wider and generally more discreet fire protection system that's in place to assure a smooth performance. Arden's safety curtain design reflects the auditorium interior back to the space of spectators, holding the curtain to its intense liminality. Never raised, the work stresses precisely the weight and consequence of liminal moments before performances, the power they have to charge spaces and bodies with expectation, anticipation, and a collective relationship with both trust and a certain bearing of threat.

Alex Margo Arden is an artist who lives and works in London. She uses theatrical methodologies to interrogate the production, interpretation, restoration, and restaging of histories. Through her conceptual research projects she often employs remaking and reperformance to question authority, authenticity, and labour. Recent solo exhibitions include, 'Attention Restoration' (2023) at Quench, Margate; 'Rock Paper Scissors' (2023) at Royal Academy of Arts, London; 'Responsibility, Responsibility, Responsibility' (2023) at Art-O-Rama, Marseille; 'All Clear' (2022) at Ginny on Frederick, London; THE FARMYARD IS NOT A

VIOLENT PLACE... (2020) at Cell Project Space, London. Recent group exhibitions include, 'Recital' (2024) at Arcadia Missa, London; 'On Feeling' (2024) at The Approach, London; 'Color of Pomegranates' (2024) at Gallery Artbeat, Tbilisi, Georgia. Her work has been written about in Frieze, Art Monthly, The Art Newspaper, Flash Art, Another Magazine, and Vogue. She is currently studying at the Royal Academy Schools and she previously graduated from Goldsmiths where she was awarded the Hamad Butt Memorial Prize.

Craig Jun Li. "untitled" (for the people of Stockholm, and for you), 2024

Lightbulbs, postcards

Craig Jun Li's "untitled" (for the people of Stockholm, and for you) revisits the work of Felix Gonzalez-Torres and the history of conceptual installation, drawing on a genealogy of art practices that entail a careful consideration of attention, theatricality and staging, as well as the many convolutions involved in recreating an artwork somewhere in the absence of its author. These themes resonate with the artist's own personal-political situation, which prevents them from leaving the USA, and with their ongoing research around strategies to access a certain language in bodily sites and architectures, through extensive citation, parameters or scores.

More specifically, Li's piece of reference is *Untitled (For Stockholm)*, conceived by Gonzalez-Torres in 1992 as a set of 12 electrical cords with 500 light bulbs on them which address celebration, reminiscence and the ephemerality of life, love and ties. To reinvoke it in Skandia, the artist has examined how these light string works by Gonzalez-Torres are defined by specific yet open-ended parameters, giving an entry point to Li's explorations of the closeness between language and site, restrictions and absence. Here, the piece is not fully recreated, rather, its material element is remotely sourced and supplied to be there in time for the opening: 500 lightbulbs left unassembled in a backspace of the theater, displayed in their shipping packaging like in a state of suspended possibility or just waiting.

Along with them, postcards with pictures of lightbulbs taken in the artist's studio in New York City are mailed to Stockholm, and the ones that have finally arrived are piled up as a remember-me-by giveaway for visitors. Again, the work conjures presences via absence, and underlines the fragility and symbolic charge of utilitarian objects that are imbued, annotated or inscribed with love and loss. The postal system as a structure of circulation and relationality, performs and contains the possibilities of a transportable specificity, the chance of a distant being-in-touch through words.

"CJ" [Craig Jun Li](#) (1998, China) is an artist based in Brooklyn, New York (Munsee Lenape land). Driven by research interests in circulation and semiotics, Li's work often configures as inconstant installations utilizing perishable materials and architectural elements. Their practice aims to investigate the oscillation between a given subject and how it's perceived in relation to image and material production.

Cara Tolmie. *Cyacrua*, 2020

Cyacrua is a circulating address to the rib bones of "AL 288-1" or "Dinkinesh", one of the oldest known bi-pedal females, also referred to as "Lucy"- named after The Beatles song Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds.

A fabric version of this ribcage, alongside two different interpretations of a pillar, are sewn onto the shirt that Cara wears in this performance. This design is a scaled down version of a work titled Listening Curtain, a large fabric hanging made in collaboration with artist Susanna Jablonski as part of their ongoing project "Gender of Sound". After exploring ASMR-like brush strokes and folly sounds made via tiny bursts of air blown into the mic, she embarks upon an incessant repetition of her own name "Cara" and the name Lucy pronounced backwards - "Ycul". Her own name is vocalised on the out-breath whilst "Ycul" is pulled through her mouth ingressively on the in-breath. By perpetually circulating these two names through her body in this way, Cara wishes to acknowledge one of the only equivalences she may be able to share with "Lucy" - that of a given name.

Cara's impulse is to tame, even drain (if she could) the sound of The Beatles from these bones. She wishes to soothe them with her brush, greet them from within an alternative paradigm of sound-making to the one that they have previously been defined by. A kind of caressive music perhaps, one that seeps out from the tiny cracks within each of their bodies. A music able to explore the potential of sound and listening as a transformative rather than defining entity.

Cara Tolmie (1984, born in Glasgow, based in Stockholm) spends much of her time oscillating between contexts as an artist, musician, performer, DJ, pedagogue and researcher. Her works have been performed and exhibited widely at art galleries, music festivals, biennials, conferences and in the public space – both as solo presentations and collaborative projects. Her practice at large centers itself upon the voice, the body, and the complex ties between the two. All at once subjective as well as socially determined, she explores voice and body as two co-dependent entities able to confirm as well as contradict one another. Within this she often explores performative techniques that dis/reorient the listening relationship between the singer and her audience through live uses of the defamiliarised, uncanny and sampled singing voice. Cara Tolmie is currently a PhD candidate in Critical Sonic Practice at Konstfack, Stockholm.

Sam Cottingham. *Spray*, 2024

Actors: Olga Pedan and Hanna Nygård

Sound: Mahmoud Tarek

Spray is a new poetic play by Sam Cottingham. The action is set outside the house of a man who is standing at his bedroom window. Passing by at street level, a woman falls in love with him. The communicative act, the weight of language and the possibility of concurrence and adjustment are all part of the “made reality of the theater”, a theater that is treated in a material and plastic way, proposing “sculptural realism against theatrical melodrama”.

Being a love story without melodrama, *Spray* relies precisely on contextual and spatial elements - which in turn can bring attention to politics, geography, sociology-, and unfolds at different heights and in spaces separated by frames and thresholds. Cottingham's new work questions the assumption that plays should build cohesive characters that are comfortably absorbed, developed and fulfilled within the narrative they are located in. Instead, the love story is approached through alienation – a distance and a feeling of not belonging with respect to what surrounds us, what we love or produce. The physicality of looks, words and attraction are the ones to bridge or reinforce that distance.

Sam Cottingham is an artist and writer based between London and Frankfurt. His written work takes form as plays, novellas and short stories and his artistic work spans painting, sculpture, video and installation. He studied Art and Art History at Goldsmiths University in London and is currently studying Fine Art at Städelschule in Frankfurt. His first novella *people person* was published by JOAN in 2023. Recent exhibitions included *zaza'*, Milan (2023), *Ginny on Frederick*, London (2022) and *Yaby*, Madrid (2020).

z.No Scott. *gods the time 'til knowing*, 2024

z.No scott's *gods the time 'til knowing* is an experiment in pidgin poetics and harmonic struggle. The audiovisual performance will present new songs and texts that, as z.No explains, thrive off the page, in the undercommons. Employing hermeneutics and operating through happenstance, z.No critiques rhythm and denounces reason.

z.No scott. is the benign ghost

behind the guidepost

disguised in guy's clothes;

a rhizome [comprised of rhinestones]

crying in tritones.

A poet by origin, z.No's work thrives off the page, in the undercommons. Turning colonial language against itself, z. works to forge phonetics into a weapon of creation — exposing the spectacle of Self like/as a dirty joke. z.No performs wherever and whenever he can, always taking it too far. A recent graduate of the CalArts' Writing & Performativity MFA, z. won the 2022 Emi Kuriyama Thesis Award for his manuscript, ynglytch. z.No's work can be found in Archway Editions, SPOIL (Hilo Press), second factory (Ugly Duckling Presse), Broken Lens Journal and, soon, in The Journal for Dominican Writers.

TEAM

September Sessions is organised and was initiated by Index and Mint
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